1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

463 326 554 Of these local specialists only the smith survives in any strength today. He shares with the mason the admiration the country people feel for physical strength and prowess. Perhaps it is this that made the more sedentary occupations of weaver, shoemaker, and tailor of less prestige. Thus the crippled son, as the quotation says, might be put to one of them.

463 294 The tailor was often a peripatetic. He moved around from house to house and community to community where he was known, living and eating among the family. He was made welcome, not only as a maker of clothes but also as a carrier of gossip. Today the few tailors who survive in the country districts are petty cotters with only a memory of their trade. The few still active ones have retreated to the towns. Most of the farmers' clothing is now shop-bought and factory-made.

463 286 [283] The weaver was perhaps the most sedentary of the local craftsmen. He is the one who has failed to survive even in the towns. The women of the farm families carded and spun the wool into yarn until home spinning died out, and broke and scutched the flax for linen, but the weaver made it into cloth. He spent all his days indoors, moving from one side of his loom to the other in a small room heavy-laden with fluff and lint. The farmers seem to remember most strongly the unhealthiness of the life, but they tell one also of the weavers' arrogance when their skill was in great demand. The following is the kind of description one can still get, the first part of it discoursing on weavers in general and the second relating the history of the local man:

> In the old days the weaver might have enough work to keep him busy for four months and, when you went to see him, he would put you off and tell you to come back in a fortnight for your goods. It would be no good for you, none in the world, if you didn't take a bowl of butter and a few dozen eggs to him

476 A man would go to town and buy two or more pottles of flax
571 to sow. Then on the first of May he would go to the garden
248 and plant it. In August he would pull it up by the roots and lay it in small bundles to be made into stooks. Then they would take it and put it into a bog and leave it there fifteen or twenty days, after which they could dry it in the house by hanging it from the rafters. About the first of November you would take it down and some men would come in and help break it. They would then put it back and later take it down and scutch it with a pronged tool, drawing the flax over it and breaking it.

476 Some time about Christmas time you would have a *meitheal*
571 of girls come in and they would sit in a semicircle round the fire and clove the flax. It would take several days depending on how much you had. The girls would stay with you all that
● 283 time. At seven in the evening they would be through and within half an hour you could hear them in the hills leaping and shouting. About eight or eight-thirty the boys would begin
[535] to arrive and there would be a dance and be no more good out of them for that night. They might have a dance every two or three days. You fed them good.

The next thing was the hackling, and this might be done by men or women. You had a box with iron prongs sticking up and you would hit the stalk against the irons and the small particles would fall into the box below. It might take several nights. Old man Roughan was a great man at the hackling, but he was always great for nothing else to do with flax. It was fine if you got him to come and help you and he would be glad to do it. Then you might be good at something else and you would go and help him with that. Some men were good at one thing and others at something else and they would help each other.

After this the next thing was the spinning, and this was done by the woman. She would sit in this corner by the fire and she might be there every night, or whenever she had the time, spinning the flax fiber into thread. She had no one to help her and it was a hard job. After it was made into thread, it would be taken out and bleached and re-wound and then taken to the
[536] weaver. The weaver made it into cloth and you would use it for sheets and shirts and other things. Flax was a hard thing and there was a lot of hard work about it.

248 They have been out of growing it for thirty or forty years

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

and now they would never think of growing it but must be running to town and buying what they want.

The process of conversion of wool to yarn and thence into cloth was equally difficult. It demanded the concerted efforts of most of the rural community. It gave scope for the development of specialists who could give their skills back and forth even though, as before, their skills were part of the equipment of all the young people in the community. Two other old fellows of Inagh combined in the following account:

> With the wool it was sheared on May 15 and, if that fell on a Monday or Tuesday and the following was Saturday in town (market day) you would see the men there with wool to sell while others would be there to buy it with large baskets in which to put it. The first thing was to card the wool. About the first of June you would get ready to spin it. For that you go around to all the neighbors and ask for a loan of a girl to spin the wool, and if you got eight or ten you must get the loan of that many spinning wheels. Then they come to the house on a certain day and I have seen eight wheels in this room and two in the other, all the girls spinning and talking away. It might take several days before they were through and they would have a dance and the boys would come around. You want to be sure to get the girls early for there is a great demand for them. After the yarn is spun, it is placed on the wall to be taken to the weaver later on.

All this was part of the pattern of work in which the members of the community were accustomed to work in close association. The behavior described here is that which we have already looked at in the discussion of the obligations of cooring. The *meitheal* referred to the working gang rather than the system in which the local habits were set. That setting was a constant play of habitual work relations between the "friends" and neighbors of the local community in which the characteristic organization of the community aligned sex and age groups and associated the

2: Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1937 ER6 Rural Irish ER6

283
342

1. Thatched-chimney. Co. Clare.
2. Making hay-ropes. Glencolumbkille, Co. Donegal.
3. Hobwalls carrying the chimney. Toormakeady, Co. Galway.

1.

2.

415
354

3.

[p. 219]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

We now come to the roof with its timber framework and thatch. It generally consists of couples resting on the side-walls and joined together by tie-beams at the top; and houses are referred to not as measuring so many feet but as being two- three- or four-coupled. The rib-lengths, between the couples, are a kind of architectural unit.[1] In most old cottages the frame of the roof is of bog-fir, but its use has been superseded by imported "fir." There are many different methods of joining the couples, for example in Donegal they do not actually meet but have a short tie at the top which rounds the roof against the wind (Fig. 20). If the walls are of clay, sod or turf, the couples may be supported on internal beams placed upright against the side-walls, but the purlin method is generally adopted to avoid the thrust of the couple ends. Long beams run from gable to gable, and may be seen projecting outside to allow for the possible movement of the end-walls. This method of roofing allows of greater width than the coupled roof and is preserved, for example, in the old weavers' houses around Lough Neagh, where space was needed for the large looms. (Figs. 22c, 27 & 28.)

342

On the framework of couples or purlins lighter timber was placed at intervals and on these were laid at right angles rows of branches or laths, often made out of split bog timber. Where teasels were cultivated for the home woollen industry their dried stalks were employed for this purpose. Then came a layer of "scraws," peeled from a carefully selected spot where the grass is tough with a spade or flachter (Chapter 15) and placed on the roof in long overlapping strips with the matted roots inwards. The scraws were of standard sizes, for instance 12 ft. long by 2 ft. by 1½ inches thick. but they were shorter than this in the south, where the flachter was not known. The scraws were generally sewn to the roof timbers with loops of sugán or fir-rope (Fig. 21). The sod layer, while universal in old houses throughout the north, is not always found in the south. Professor O'Riordain has described old houses in Co. Limerick, for example, where the thatch is sown directly on to the battens.

Fig. 21.

[283]
[184]

[1] *cf.* the fork-intervals or "bays" of the old English house.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

rotation grass is referred to as upland hay to distinguish it from meadow hay, although in fact it often grows at lower levels. Sometimes at this stage the hay is hung on bushes and fences something after the Scandinavian manner. 246

When sufficiently dry the laps are opened and the hay piled into small cocks (ricks or lumps), and this process is repeated a number of times if the weather is bad until the stage of large hand-cocks is reached, or, if the hay is in good condition, even larger "tramp-cocks," trodden down firmly. The cocks are tied down with a hay-rope made on the spot (Fig. 50) and left "to season" for a period which may be only a week or two but which, to the stranger, seems generally an unconscionable time. In this matter the Irish

[283]

Fig. 50.

are confirmed in what the English call their lazy ways. Admittedly there are dry years when it would do no harm to the hay to stack it at once, but the Irish method is adapted to the average season, and rooted in a firmly-fixed rota of farm work. In August the turf must be carried home while the bogs are firm enough to take the carts, and in many parts the busy time of flax-pulling and retting is come. Although these alternative demands on the farmer's time are not always present, they may have helped in the past to standardize the rotation of work. Moreover, when the opportunity of carry- 492 246

[314]

burden in Ireland as among other peasantries. The burden-rope, constructed of rushes, horse-hair or grass-rope (Chap. 14 and Figs. 79 & 80), was employed for carrying surprisingly large loads of hay, corn or bushes—" as much as a pony could draw," I have been told—while the burden-creel, slung over one shoulder or worn like a rucksack by women who would thus have their hands free for knitting, was mainly used for carrying turf. Nor should we omit the wheel-barrow, both box and turf types (Chapter 15 and Fig. 90), the hand barrow (for loads of stones and also for fish and nets) and the two-man turf creel (Fig. 91).

Side-creels are the panniers attached to an ass or small pony. Most of them are constructed with a hinged bottom so that the contents of turf, wrack, gravel or manure are automatically unloaded (Fig. 58). The sides are broken by ornamental " windows " which give a handhold for lifting and help to lighten the creel. Comparative study would reveal several regional and specialized forms of creel, and I have observed different methods of attachment even in neighbouring valleys. They are generally slung on wooden pegs driven into a roof-shaped crutch or straddle (Fig. 56) which rests on two straw mats. In the example figured from Tuam (Fig. 57) the straw mats are pegged together, and the straddle is strengthened by two osier ties, to one of which the tail-sugán is fastened. When hay or corn is being carried the creels may be dispensed with and the " bottles " or sheaves hung on the straddle pegs with an osier ring. Alternatively the creels are tied together with ropes which pass over a thick straw pad laid along the animal's spine, and the straddle is not used. The creels are D-shaped and can be made of openwork, for turf or wrack, or of closely-woven sides for manure. We shall have something more to say about their construction in Chapter 14.

Fig. 56.

Among horse-drawn vehicles the sledge or slipe is very generally employed for transporting stones, manure, or turf and also for conveying the plough and harrows from one field to another. I illustrate the common slipe of Co. Antrim

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

285 baskets, and of creels and other objects of wickerwork. To do the subject justice would require a large volume, and we must confine ourselves to some broad aspects. We have referred to creels and kishes of various kinds in Chapter 12. These are objects which the countryman makes for himself, as distinct from the "fancy" basket work which is generally in the hands of special families. To take the creels first, they are constructed bottom-upwards in the same way as the frame-work of the Boyne curragh, by sticking the stout standards in the earth as though to make wattles and bending them over
[824] to form the foundation of the bottom. Strong black sally, hazel or rowan are employed instead of the soft basket willows. The standards are left projecting above the rim of the creel when it is finished, so that the sides do not lift off. But a well woven "mouth" is also necessary to prevent slipping: it may be made single or double. Both creels and kishes may have windows in the sides (Chapter 12 and Fig. 58), an ornamental feature also found in the old wicker cradles. Creels and kishes may be loosely or tightly woven according to whether they are intended for turf or manure. Openwork creels are made in Co. Antrim by pegging the side rods into the two corner standards at intervals of about 4 inches. The old custom in Donegal is to repair two old creels and make two new ones each year. (*See Plate V.*)

285 227 Lobster-pots (Chapter 16), stock-pots, fruit and fish hampers, are made on a perforated wooden frame which may be regarded as a substitute for the earth, but most of the

● [283]

Fig. 73. Length 19".

285 "fancy work" is undertaken by specialized basket makers, and we can do no more than indicate the variety and skill of their products. There are certain localities where the tradition of basket-making is strong, for instance the shores of

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Lough Neagh—incidentally one of the oldest occupied areas in the country—the valley of the Suir and the Aran Islands. I illustrate a boat-shaped yarn-holder (Fig. 73) and also two types of " calf basket " (Fig. 74), which are tied over the calf's muzzle to prevent it from taking the cow's milk. (In north Antrim, as in Wales, I have seen instead a leather strap armed with nails which is fastened on in such a way that the nails prick the cow's udder). The calf basket recalls the Roman *corbis constricta* which prevented the plough oxen from cropping the vine shoots. In fine work the basket maker uses split rods which he prepares with a " cleaver." The example illustrated (Fig. 75) is made of cow's horn.

Fig. 74.

Fig. 75.

Then there are the shallow fish baskets, resembling the potato-dish shown in Fig. 31, which the Galway fisherwomen carry on their heads. In Limerick oval trays or " floats " are used for hawking shell-fish or fruit: they are of various sizes from 1 to 2 feet in length. Potato baskets (Fig. 54) and shallow baskets used in connection with wool-dyeing must be mentioned, and I illustrate two kinds of linebasket (Fig. 76) which, like the lobster pots (Fig. 104) are made by the fishermen. The tall apple-baskets used for picking fruit in the Armagh orchards taper down to a narrow base. On the other hand the deep carrying-baskets of the Aran Islands are shaped

285
415
[482]
[184]
[482]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

184
285
482

Line Baskets

Fig. 76. Length *c.* 3 ft.

into a narrow mouth, a feature which is found in all Aran basket-work. Miss Gahan of the Irish Homespun Society regards it as an adaptation to the conditions on the islands, for the contents might easily be spilled owing to the number of loose stone walls which have to be crossed on a journey to the fields. Many of the Aran carrying baskets (" kishauns ") are constructed of coiled straw rope bound together with split bramble (Fig. 77). They no doubt help to keep warm the food carried in them, such as boiled potatoes, boiled in their skins needless to say, in the Irish fashion. Such " lipe-work " was once common in Wales, where seed-baskets, yarn-holders, hassocks and meal containers were made in this way, but in Ireland the only coiled work I have seen outside the Aran Islands is the bee-skep of rye straw, tied with bramble. The illustration shows the small bone pin or awl used by the islanders in threading the brambles. Similar pins, which doubtless had many uses, are frequently found in archæological excavations, particularly on sites where a Mesolithic heritage may be suspected.

[282]

[231]

Fig. 77.
Note bone pin.

This brings us to the very large topic of the uses made of straw. There is no need to refer to the value of oat straw as fodder or as thatch, though it does not last long as roofing material, and either wheat or rye straw is preferred. A humble example of the use of thatch is shown in the beehive (Fig. 77*a*) Rope (sugán) made of straw or hay still finds many uses, especially for tying down thatch on houses and stacks. It is twisted on a " thraw-hook " of ash or hazel, with a sally hand-grip, but the old styles are declining with the spread of a simple " twister " of strong bent wire (Fig. 78). This type is found throughout the British Isles in many forms some of which are

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[231]

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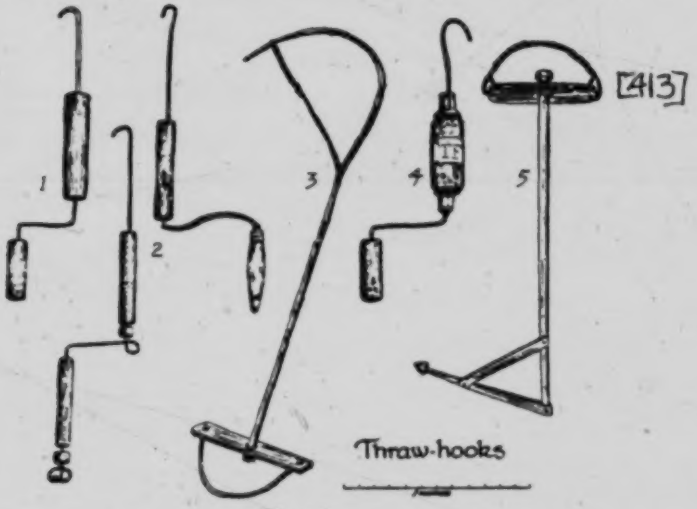
Fig. 77*a*.
Height 4 ft.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

known to be of mediæval descent. The method of manufacture is shown in Fig. 50, and the tying down of a hay pike in Fig. 51. Sugán was sometimes employed instead of wattle

283



[413]

Fig. 78.

Sugán twisters 1. Co. Antrim. 2. Both Donegal. 3. Lecale, Down. 4. Leitrim. 5. Dingle, Kerry.

in the chimney canopies. It was used for the seats of chairs and for the clothes-line which stretched across the kitchen. A short length was sometimes worn as a girdle around a child's dress. From it were made tethering ropes, spancels and langles, traces and tail-ropes; and on the Donegal seaboard I have heard of cabbages being tethered "against the wind" by three hay-ropes! It is on record that the men of Mayo would descend the seacliffs suspended by a straw-rope.

A length of sugán is also the foundation course of many more complex objects of straw such as mats, mattresses, screens, beehives, nesting boxes, stools, arm-chairs, baskets and hampers. I illustrate (Fig. 79) one of the conical hen-nests which are hung on pegs in the kitchen: large

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[481]

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Fig. 79.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Fig. 80.

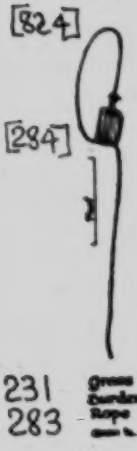

Fig. 81.

rectangular examples containing four nest-holes in two storeys are found in some districts, for example in Co. Longford. Though not easy to describe, the construction is quite simple once a start has been made. The finished objects have the appearance of being coiled. While some may have been made in this way, any that I have examined or watched under construction are plaited. The first stage is to twist a long sugán and double it into a two-ply rope, inserting between each third twist a small handful of straw known as a "tate." For the second row the tates are folded forward and plaited, the third rope being provided by the combined ends of the last tate. Handfuls of straw are inserted at regular intervals during the process, and the plaiting goes on until the desired shape and size are reached. The effect is shown in the hen-nest (Fig. 79). Straw collars for horses are made in a different way: some consist of two-ply ropes sown together with twine, but the type used with the Glens' slide-car is simpler (Plate IV).

Ropes of many kinds were in steady demand for tethering and spancelling, and it was the custom to prepare a good supply during the winter. Rushes were also used for the purpose, and they still meet a number of other needs such as bedding, thatching and flax-tying, apart from their old uses for toys, baskets, floor beds, rushlights and the ceremonial crosses to be discussed in Chapter 17. For making ropes the rushes were cut in late summer and beetled with a maul (or "mell"), then broken and twisted by hand so as to get rid of the pith. Dried in the sun and tied in bundles, they were stored until the dark days of winter, when they were fashioned into burden ropes and binnen-ropes (Chapters 9 & 12). The rushes were twisted by hand, first as single ropes, then in two ply: finally an eye was made at one end, and this end was strengthened by threading through another length of rope so as to make a plait. Spancels of rush rope were used to tie together the front legs of kicking cows, and horses were prevented from straying at nights by similar treatment. "Langles" and "burochs," tying together the side and the hind legs respectively, were other methods of hobbling. Straw ropes were commonly employed instead of rush ropes for hobbling,

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

and similarly the cattle were fastened in the byre by ropes of straw, as in Clare, or of horse-hair, as in Kerry. Of the two burden ropes illustrated (Figs. 80, 81) the Donegal example is a two-ply rush rope with an eye made of a peeled stick bent into a loop: the Aran specimen is of grass (Manilla) rope passing through a hole in a wooden runner. Similar blocks of wood serve as a swivel to prevent kinks in tethering ropes, separate lengths of rope passing through each hole.

Reference has been made to the fir-ropes used in securing roofing scraws and thatch. Thin splits of straight-grained bog-fir about four feet long and an inch wide are twisted by hand into hollow cylinders, joined end to end to make a coil of about 50 feet. Two or three of these are twisted together to give the finished product, which combines great strength and elasticity with the capacity to stand up to all weathers. Fir-rope was often stretched across the wooden bed-frame to make a springy mattress. A short "tie" of fir-rope is shown in Fig. 21, p. 63.

[p. 132 is blank]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEASHORE.

The seashore, where the first Irishmen picked up a living some thousands of years ago, still plays a significant role in the islands and around the coasts and is laid under contribution for seaweed and drift weed (wrack), for sand and gravel, and for accessory supplies of food. On many an Irish strand too, seasonal festivals, horse-racing and country games have only slowly given way to holiday makers from the city. Communal rights in the seashore were jealously guarded, and one constantly comes across ancient customs that have survived in this most changeless of environments. I recall the countryman " on the brew " (bureau ; that is, on the dole) whom I watched in County Down twisting on his bare thigh, his palm dried with a dusting of wood-ash from the hearth, the two-ply " crop " of horse-hair for his fishing line—each ply consisting of twenty-one strands taken from the tail of a white mare. This method of twisting is found amongst almost all primitive peoples, and can be paralleled, for instance, from the remote Andaman Islands. His outfit for codling fishing is illustrated in Fig. 94, which shows two hair crops attached to a home-made sinker of lead—called from its shape a " frog " ; the use of horse-hair has survived in this case because it is stiffer than gut and serves to keep the hooks from fouling each other. Rock-fishing lines in Co. Antrim are sometimes made of black horse-hair, but for the part next the hook, called the foot-line, white hair is used. Well-made lines of carefully selected hair

22 [283] 227 226 [237]

[TEXT CONTINUES TOP OF P. 144--ANALYST]

1C: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

The spinning-wheel and hand-loom are the same as those commonly used on the west coast, the former, as usual, having no treadle. [172] [283]

Querns are still in use, and in connection with them the boran, or sieve of sheepskin stretched over a wicker frame, used for screening the meal. [252] [412]

Grain is still winnowed by shaking it in a sieve in a strong wind. [243]

The method of washing clothes is the same as that customary in Connemara, the clothes being folded, laid in the water of a lake or pool, and beaten with a club or paddle. [296]

The tailor, when making clothes, does not measure his customers with a tape, but takes all his measurements on one sheet of paper, marking the lengths by cutting notches out of the edge. [294]

The curraghs, which are still in use, are of the usual form; they are rapidly going out of fashion, however. [501]

The anchor used for small boats is a stone, not fixed in a wooden clamp as in Clare and Aran, but having a groove around it for the rope.

As mentioned previously, the apparatus used for the shark-fishing is very rude and primitive.

2. *Antiquities.*— Inishbofin is not very rich in architectural antiquities, and the few that still remain are being rapidly destroyed; some ruins which were standing in the first half of the present century have altogether disappeared, and the others are much shattered. 172

In Inishshark, also, the buildings have sustained a great injury.

It does not lie within my province to enter upon any detailed description of the ruins; but I desire, in the following notes (extracted almost *verbatim* from my Field Note-book), to direct the attention of archæologists to the buildings of interest in these islands which are being rapidly blotted out of existence. The number and nature of these have been described by the late Mr. O'Donovan, Mr. Hardiman, Mr. G. H. Kinahan, and others.

In the account of their present condition given below, they are arranged in the order in which they are described by Mr. Hardiman.[1]

Inishbofin.—(1). St. Colman's church, in Knock townland, built in A.D. 667, is in a very ruinous state, and the interior is filled with rough gravestones and weeds, and in a small recess near the east window is a pile of crania and broken bones. In the enclosure around the church the foundations of the cells (cloghans (?)) of the abbey, or monastic colony, may still be traced, though with difficulty, but the

[1] "Hy-Iar Connaught," p. 116, footnote.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

113 OFFICIAL:

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EXPLANATION OF PLATES VIII. AND IX.

PLATE VIII.

142 FIG. 1.—James Joyce, aged 48 years, No. 5, Middlequarter.

291 FIGS. 2 AND 3.—Anthony Lavelle, aged 35 years, No. 2, Knock.

FIG. 4.—Group of men, Inishbofin.

Taken in order from left to right, the names are, respectively:—

Back row.—John Burke, boatwright; Michael Halloran, king of Shark; John Tierney, postman; Mick Kerrigan, weaver; Redmond Toole, fisherman.

Front row.—Martin Baker, John Malia (or Malley), Ned Burke, Redmond Toole, all fishermen.

FIG. 5.—Group of women, Westquarter, Inishbofin.

Taken in the same order as the other group, the names are—Margaret Ward, Nancy Browne (first cousins), Nelly Holloran, Mary Holloran (daughter of last), Brigid Concannon.

PLATE IX.

412 FIG. 1.—Quern still in use in Middlequarter, Inishbofin.

283 FIG. 2.—Spinning wheel in Middlequarter.

296 FIG. 3.—Method of washing clothes, Church Lough, Knock.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin.

412

●283

296

[End Plate B]

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

178 grinding barley for cattle food, or in some few cases for malt for [412] *potern*.

Hooped piggins are used in many houses, as also are sheepskin [415] sieves (*borans*).

The spinning-wheel for wool is of the usual Connaught type, without treadle, and is made in the district. The cards used for the wool are imported, being all made in Dublin. The hand-looms are the same as used elsewhere in the West, and of rather rude construction, though capable of turning out good work.

A machine of rather primitive design is used for compressing cloth. It was made by its user, and has been working for many years.

Rush-lights are used in some houses, and in others the rude lamp already referred to, which is evidently merely a reproduction in tinware of the old stone or iron lamp for fish oil.

The stills employed by the makers of poteen are constructed of tin, and of simple but effective design. They are made in the owners houses by tinkers.

The curragh, of the usual form, is the boat most in use, and seems likely to hold its own. It is now covered with tarred canvas, but seventy years ago horse-skins were used for this purpose. A large stone is often used as an anchor for small boats.

2. *Antiquities* may be divided into two classes—(*a*) Architectural remains, and (*b*) Articles of use or ornament. (*a*) Architectural remains are still very numerous, though many of the most interesting have altogether disappeared; of these the most noticeable was the *Oileach*, the fortified seat of the chiefs of Hy-Fiachrach, which was situated at Elly in the Mullet, on or near the position of Bingham's Castle. Several castles belonging to the Barrets and Burkes have also been entirely destroyed.

Some of the ruins still remaining are of pagan origin, others are ecclesiastical structures. The principal pagan antiquities are the duns or forts, both stone and earthen, the monuments, &c. There are several duns, both within the district actually treated of in this Paper, and along the coast line of the surrounding country; those within the Mullet are *Dunnamoe*, a stone fort of large size, built on a rocky promontory overhanging the sea, and formerly one of the most perfect on this coast; of late years, however, it has suffered severely, the greater part of the wall has been broken down to afford building material for houses and walls about Belmullet; the guard-chambers mentioned by O'Donovan and others are now almost destroyed, the outworks thrown down. One part of the wall alone

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 177 designed for temporary habitations, for it results, after repeated additions of straw and mud, in an extremely thick and heavy roof. Yet its distribution on the east coast seems to point to introduction from overseas, and in Co. Down it is known as English thatch. One would like to know more about old thatching techniques in other parts of north-western Europe. In Galway a house with mud-sealed thatch is known as a 'shaken house'.[1]

342 [283] Another way of securing the thatch, which has a limited distribution chiefly along the Antrim coast, we may term the pegged method. Horizontal two-ply ropes made of sally, heather, or the tough fibres of bog-fir roots are laid along the roof parallel to the eaves at intervals of a foot or so and pegged to the scraw with wooden pins which are pushed in upwards so as not to lead water through the roof. A row of scraws is pegged to the rather sharp ridge (Fig. 9, 4). I have observed this style of thatch in south-west Lancashire. Much more widely distributed is the thatch which is found along the north and west coasts from east Ulster round to Kerry, but comes into its own particularly in Donegal, where it gives some of the most attractive roofs in north-western Europe. In Donegal they are rounded at the ridge to throw off the winds, the supporting couples being designed to this end with short cross-pieces breaking the angle of the ridge (Fig. 10). In some [284] districts the ropes, formerly of twisted straw or bog fir but now generally ready-made of sisal, run in both directions to make a complete network; in others the horizontal ropes are omitted because of the obstructing gable-ends which, rising above the thatch, protect it from the winds. The ropes are secured to the walls by means of a row of stone-pegs below each eave. This method of tying is found also in north Mayo, most typically in areas known to have been settled from Donegal in the seventeenth century.[2] Here the horizontal ropes are carried over the gable in steps left for the purpose (Fig. 12, 2). Such roofs are said to be 'stitched': a close mesh may require up to a mile's length of roping. The older method of securing the ropes, from Mayo to Kerry, is to fasten the ends to small boulders

[1] C. R. Browne, *Inishbofin and Inishshark*.
[2] C. R. Browne, *Ballycroy*.

[Text continues on p. 54]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

HOME-MADE THINGS

By far the most versatile of home-produced rope-making materials is straw. Rye straw is longer, softer and more flexible than any other, but very little rye is now grown save along the west coast where it is still the most popular thatching material. Wheat straw is the best substitute, but in fact most farmers must now depend on oat straw, thus 'tying up' some of their fodder. Straw rope (súgán) not only had many direct uses but served as the basis for such crafts as the making of mats, baskets, bee-skeps, mattresses, hen roosts, pigeons' nests and horse harness. It was used for seating chairs and making arm-chairs, and for a great variety of hobbles and tethers for animals and ties for holding down thatch. The fondness of the Irish for tethering and hobbling their livestock must be seen in the light of inadequate fences and the conditions of partnership farming in open fields. Not only the larger animals, but hens, turkeys, and geese were commonly restrained in this way. 'All livestock of the poorer man is in this sort of thraldom' wrote Arthur Young.[1] One may still see a tethered hen with her chickens that might have stepped out of the illuminated pages of the fourteenth century Luttrell Psalter. A straw rope stretched across the kitchen made a serviceable clothes-line. Torches were sometimes made from twisted straw; on the other hand, when suitably coated with mud, straw ropes made a fireproof smoke-canopy. Chopped straw or layers of straw ropes were also used in constructing mud walls, and it is possible that, as in Sweden, stakes wrapped in straw rope daubed in clay were once an alternative to 'wattle and daub' for wall building. It has been stated that the fowlers of the Mayo coast would let themselves down the cliffs on straw ropes,[2] which must have been exceptionally well made; ropes made from the fibres of bog fir were more reliable. In Co. Antrim fowling ropes were of horse hide, but bent ropes are also recorded.[3] I have seen countrymen on a windy fair day wearing an improvised belt over their long coats in the form of a straw rope, and in the early nineteenth century children in Co. Cork were described as 'clad in nothing except a coarse woollen shirt that came half way down the thighs and

[1]Arthur Young, *Tour*, 2, part 2, 37.
[2]P. Knight, *Erris in the Irish Highlands*, 55.
[3]R. Dobbs, *County Antrim in 1683*.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

283 was bound about the waist with a suggan of straw.' The Rev. Philip Skelton was said by his biographer 'in cold weather, to go through Pettigo with a straw rope about him, to keep his large coat on.'[1]

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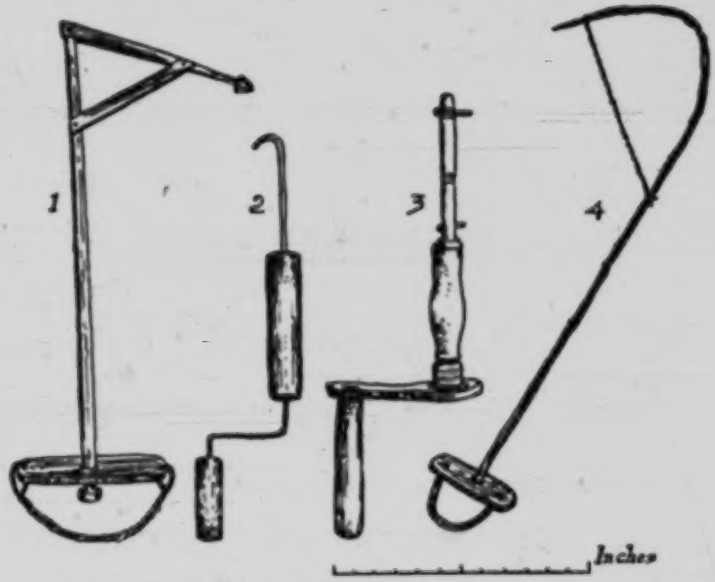

FIG. 67. Rope-twisters. (1) Co. Kerry. (2) Co. Antrim. (3) Co. Armagh. (4) Co. Down. Nos. 1 and 4 are the old-style 'thraw-hooks'.

Short lengths of rope ('thumb-ropes' of hay or straw) are skilfully twisted by hand or, if the material is fine, made by wrapping it round a stick and pulling it out, but a simple tool of ancient lineage, the throw-crook or thraw-hook, is employed when long ropes are needed: it is known also in England and in Scandinavia. A twister of cranked wire resembling a carpenter's brace has, however, largely replaced the wooden hook; it is more tiring but requires less skill (Fig. 67). I have seen a wooden hayrake serving as an improvised thraw-hook. The 283 prepared ropes are wound into golden balls (clews) up to two

[1] S. Burdy, *The Life of Philip Skelton*, 131.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

feet in diameter. (Small, carefully made clews of hay rope, with a centre of rags or corks, are occasionally used as footballs; similar coils of rope in England seem to be oval in shape and would serve rather as balls for Rugby football.) Laying by a stock of clews was a useful occupation for a wet day. The man of the house chose the sedentary end of the rope, sitting under cover in the barn among the thrashed straw and feeding it evenly into the rope as the other end was twisted by a retreating youth armed with a thraw-hook. As the rope grew, the boy had to withdraw into the rain away from the shelter and the sociability of the barn, and this simple scene is the theme of one of Douglas Hyde's Irish plays, *Casadh an tSugáin* (The Twisting of the Rope). A rival suitor makes love to a girl in the barn while the unfortunate twister is forced by his unco-operative employer to watch the proceedings from the end of a lengthening and apparently endless rope.

Hay ropes are both softer and stronger than straw and were used, for example, for parts of the harness where straw ropes would have chafed and broken. They were naturally employed for securing large cocks of hay (tramp cocks, Fig. 52) against the wind; and tethers for young animals were often made of hay rope. A Donegal landlord writing of the early nineteenth century tells of cabbages tethered against the wind with three hay ropes.[1] The shearing rope, four or five feet long, by which the legs of sheep were tied together when clipping the wool, was also made of hay or marram grass. Here we may take note of the curious practice of piecemeal shearing, recorded from Mayo[2] and Donegal[3] and possibly to be attributed to ancient usage rather than to indolence. It seems that the women were in the habit of clipping bits off the sheep at any season, as they needed the wool. Stronger than ropes of straw or hay are those made of rushes or sedges, and stronger still those of fir, heather, birch twigs, willow bark, horsehair or rawhide. Bog fir ropes were still being twisted in north Antrim, a few years ago, for securing thatch and making bed-frames. Ropes were made even from seaweed, as we shall see in the following chapter. Many

[1] J. Hamilton, *Sixty Years Experience*, 19.
[2] C. R. Browne, *Garumna and Letternullen*.
[3] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 24.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

283 of these rope-making materials had other uses as well, not forgetting their functions in ceremony and magic as represented by Briget's crosses, harvest knots, the blaeberry baskets of Lammas and the rush ladders of Hallowe'en. Better known, [373] though no longer made, are the rushlights whose feeble glow, in the words of Gilbert White, made 'darkness visible'.

[284] [285]

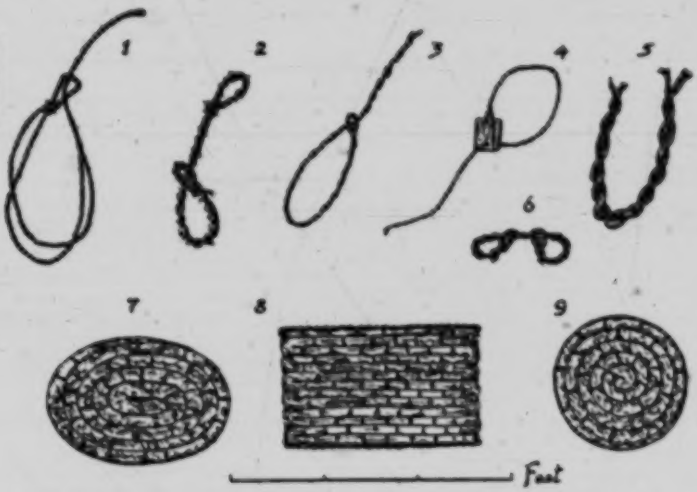

FIG. 68. Ropes and mats. (1) Rush burden rope, Co. Donegal. (2) Tie of cow-hair, Co. Kerry. (3) Willow bark burden rope, Co. Roscommon. (4) Grass burden rope, Aran Islands. (5) Tie of fir-rope, from roof, Co. Down. (6) Sheep's langle of oat straw, Co. Down. (7) Plaited mat of marram grass, Co. Wexford. (8) Coiled mat of rye straw, Aran Islands. (9) Coiled mat of oat straw, Co. Donegal.

283 482 Examples of ropes and mats of various kinds are shown in Fig. 68. The burden ropes, carefully made in two or three ply, enabled quite heavy loads to be carried from inaccessible places. A correspondent in Co. Cork has sent me the following account of one method of lifting the burden, in this case of furze (gorse, whin) which was harvested both for bedding and for fodder. 'Passing his rope round the bundle, the carrier would throw himself on his back on top of the bundle, kick his heels in the air and jerk himself to the vertical, walking away completely concealed beneath a moving mountain of furze.' Where tracks

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

were poor and there were no wheeled vehicles, or where there was no horse for a slide-car, the burden rope was all that was required to carry home the harvest; distances were mercifully small on the tiny farms. Rushes for rope making were cut when fully grown, beetled with a mell and broken by hand to rid them of pith. They were then spread to dry and afterwards tied in bundles ready to be fashioned into ropes when wintry weather brought indoor leisure. Ropes made of cowhair as well as horsehair, sometimes mixed with seasoned sedge (sprit) once found many uses about the farm. Horsehair fishing lines and snares for seabirds are described elsewhere, but we may refer here to snares for small birds which in south Armagh, for example, are laid on the grass in hard wintry weather over a scattering of grain or breadcrumbs. Inside the frame of a pegged string or a bent sally rod are tied a dozen or more snares made of single or double horsehair. By this means blackbirds, thrushes, sparrows, and finches are caught by the feet, nowadays for sport but, no doubt, once as a welcome addition to the food supply. Similar horsehair snares for catching small birds are known from England and, further afield, from the Sudan. Reins of horsehair are said to have been common quite recently in Donegal, and I would hazard a guess that horsehair nets, such as were made in Harris (Martin Martin tells us) for catching seals, were formerly made there.

Mats and baskets of many kinds were fashioned from straw and other materials such as marram grass. This tough grass is harvested in places all around the coast and put to many uses, including thatching. It is cut below the surface of the sandy dunes, and in Donegal I have seen a toothed sickle used for the purpose. The techniques of constructing mats and baskets of these materials are closely related and seem to fall into three classes, sown plaits, built-up plaits and coiled work. Coiled basketry is best represented in the once universal bee-skep, in the seed-baskets of the south, the seats and armchairs of the west, and in the food-carrying baskets of the Aran Islands (Fig. 69). It is an interesting detail of their construction that a bone pin is used to insert the ties, which are usually made of split briar. The conical hens' nests hung on pegs on the kitchen walls (Fig. 16) are also constructed in a coil technique, but

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

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FIG. 70. Rush, grass and straw-work. (1) Cuckoo pint made of rushes, Co. Armagh. (2) Butterfly cage of rushes, Co. Down. (3) Rush bracelet in nine-strand plait, Co. Armagh. (4) 'Hen's claw' of grass, Co. Mayo. (5) 'Brigett's rag' of oat straw. Tory Island charm. (6) 'Harvest star' of flax, Co. Antrim. (7) Rush rattle, Co. Mayo. (8) Blaeberry basket of rushes, Co. Down. (9) Harvest knot of flax, Co. Armagh.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

226 [415] [386] Scallop shells were put to many uses and were often a substitute for the iron oil-pan of the open-wicked crusie. Seashells were also burnt to make lime for whitewashing the houses.

[262] In late summer the sprat come ashore in vast numbers on the west and south coasts, so that in Donegal 'they constituted the chief food of the peasantry during three or four months of the year.'[1] They were taken from the water in buckets and sieves, and the mackerel pursuing their prey close against the rocks might be caught almost as easily. In Waterford harbour there were specially erected wickerwork head weirs to take the sprat; and Dr. Went has described a wattled sprat-weir in working order in the estuary of the Blackwater.[2] Fishing from the rocks, too, is most popular in harvest time and though now little more than a pastime it once provided a reserve of food for the winter. About hay-harvest the ballan wrasse is at its best, 'when the flags (wild iris) are in bloom', they say. Known as bavin, byan, morran and by other names, it is now despised nearly everywhere, as is the coalfish which was salted and dried [192] and which has different names in Gaelic for every stage of its growth to demonstrate its former importance and popularity. 'Glassan' oil was the luminant for the crusie lamps in Rathlin Island. On the north coast you may see anglers 'frassing' for small coalfish, that is attracting them by spitting into the water chewed potatoes or limpets. Formerly ground bait was made [412] by pounding limpets in rock basins of the type known as 'bullauns' (Fig. 90). Occasionally you may come across a fisherman casting a feather lure for pollack with a line made wholly or in part of horsehair. One method of twisting these lines, with quills, will be described in the following chapter. For short lengths next the hook—the fine foot-lines—white hair is preferred, and I have seen it made in County Down by ● [283] twisting the hair between the bare thigh and a hand dusted with wood ash, a method practised by 'primitives' in many parts of the world. Two strands of from fifteen to twenty hairs are twisted on each other. (The anglers in the Seine at Paris are also said to prefer a 'crop' made from a grey mare's tail.) To

[1] 'Kinnfaela', *The Cliff Scenery of South-Western Donegal*, 19.
[2] A. E. J. Went, *Antiquity*, 25 (1951), 32–35.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

262 sold fresh in the markets of the Bann Valley, and were salted down for winter use in place of herrings.[1] They have gone the way of most of the pre-famine 'relishes' which came to be despised as the threat of famine faded after the middle of last century. The elvers, too, used to be taken out of the teeming rivers in spring with sieves and pressed into cakes or boiled in milk and made into a kind of eel-cheese. In the River Bann the 286 elvers are now trapped at the first weir, at the tidal limit, and transported upstream, up to 30 million a year being given an easy passage in this way. A marked reduction in the size of the silver eels netted on their return to the sea some ten years later has been interpreted as a result of this interference with nature. The bulk of the eels taken are sold live in the London markets. [231] In addition to elvers salmon fry also was in former times taken for food and fed to pigs, and by an Act of Elizabeth's reign swine were prohibited from feeding on the shores of tidal rivers 'where they destroy a great quantity of salmon and eel fry'.[2]

Many traditional methods of fishing survive on the lakes of the Irish midlands. The otter board, now more often seen along the coast where fishermen trawl for flat fish in sandy bays, was formerly widely used in lake fishing and is considered to be 'an implement of very ancient origin in Ireland'.[3] Related to it is the 'pooka', a board fitted with mast and sail which carried out the baited long lines.[4] Fishing lines were until recently 283 sometimes made of horsehair by an interesting and undoubtedly ancient method. The instruments employed are goose or swan quills, cut down to make open-ended tubes some three inches long, two or three being needed according to whether a two- or three-strand line is being prepared. From ten to twenty long hairs taken from a horse's tail are threaded through each quill and knotted together at one end, the other ends of the quills being plugged with short pieces of quill which grip the hairs yet allow them to slide through. The quills are now rolled one against the other in the fingers, and as the strands twist on one another they pull down the hairs which feed them. The

[1] G. V. Sampson, *Memoir*, 243.
[2] W. Tighe, *Statistical Observations, County of Kilkenny*, 103.
[4] C. R. Browne, *Ballycroy*. See also R. U. Sayce, *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 53 (1954).
[4] W. H. Maxwell, *Wild Sports of the West*, 77.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

line grows as if by magic as the quills rotate in nimble fingers. 283 ●
A fresh supply of hairs is inserted from time to time by removing the plugs. I illustrate an example of this fascinating apparatus made for me by Mr. T. J. Barron of Knockbride, Co. Cavan (Fig. 81). Mr. A. T. Lucas has described the Cavan

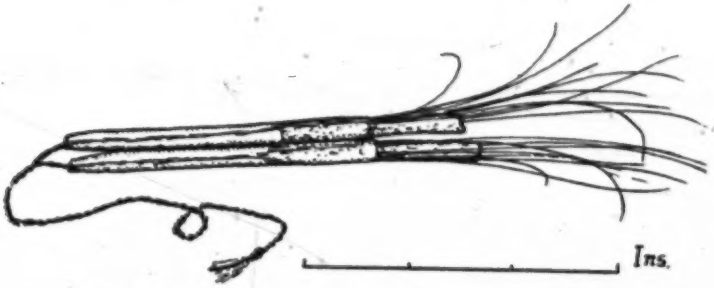

FIG. 81. Quills used for making horsehair fishing lines, Co. Cavan. The quills are rolled between the forefingers.

specimens and others from Co. Mayo.[1] In Cavan the lines were made for bream fishing: the bream were both split, salted and dried and stored fresh in little ponds on the lake shores. Around the coasts—I have seen examples from the Aran Islands and from Co. Down—a more complicated machine was made for twisting long lines of hemp, three spindles being rotated by pulling on an endless cord twisted round each spindle.[2] A very similar device is employed in China for making bamboo ropes for raising coal in primitive mines. On the shores of Lough Neagh the long lines are manufactured in rustic rope-walks. These night-lines, which have tended to replace draft-nets, are set in lengths of up to four miles. The season of yellow (feeding) eel fishing runs from March to October. It is illegal, as we have mentioned, but shows no signs of being given up. The eel fishermen claim immemorial rights and are not deterred by the fines imposed when they are caught. Their vocabulary, like that of the men who work the eel weirs on the River Bann, has many words which have come down from Gaelic and perhaps from

[1]A. T. Lucas, *Journal of the Galway Arch. and Hist. Soc.*, 24 (1951), 111–14.
[2]E. E. Evans, *Mourne Country*, Fig. 63.

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[155] bathing his chest in the mother's absence. (In this case, Oedipal and sexual attitudes probably were at work in tandem.)

It must be pointed out that nudity is also shunned for "health" 158 reasons, for another obtrusive Inis Beag character trait is hypochondria. 751 In some cases, however, it is hard to determine whether concern with [291] modesty or health is dominant in a particular behavioral response. Fear [834] of colds and influenza is foremost among health concerns; rheumatism [753] and related muscular joint ailments, migraine headaches and other psychosomatic disorders, tooth decay, indigestion ("nervous stomach"), and hypermetropia are other widespread pathologies which cause worry among the folk—not to mention those of supernatural origin.

514 Secrecy surrounds the acts of urination and defecation. The evac-827 uation of infants before siblings and strangers is discouraged, and [863] animals that discharge in the house are driven out. Chickens that ha-825 bitually "dirty" their nests while setting are soon killed and eaten. [562] Although some women drink spirits privately, they seldom do so at [273] parties. In part this is because of the embarrassment involved in visiting the outside toilet with men in the "street" looking on. One of the most [241] carefully guarded secrets of Inis Beag, unreported in the many works describing island culture, is the use of human manure mixed with sand as a fertilizer. We were on the island eight months before we discovered that compost is not "street drippings" and "scraw," but decomposed feces. With "turf" becoming more difficult to procure from the main-237 land, some islanders have taken to importing coal and processed peat and 372 burning cattle dung. The dung is prepared for use in difficult-to-reach plots at the back of the island when tourists are few in number; it is 514 burned covertly because of the overtones of sex and poverty. Another • 283 custom that my wife and I learned of late in our research, due to the [462] secrecy surrounding it, concerns the thickening of wool; men are required to urinate in a container and tread the wool therein with their bare feet.

* 831 Other major manifestations of sexual repression in Inis Beag are 522 the lack of a "dirty joke" tradition (at least as the term is understood [154] by ethnologists and folklorists) and the style of dancing, which allows little bodily contact among participants. I have heard men use various verbal devices—innuendoes, puns, and asides—that they believed bore [123] sexual connotations; relatively speaking, they were pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a verse refers to an island bachelor arising late in the day after "dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate"; this is